



**Eds**

*Eds - I*

**Ness09**

## Eds by Ness09

**Series:** [Eds \[1\]](#)

**Category:** IT (2017)

**Genre:** Aged-Up Character(s), Happy Ending, M/M, Misunderstandings, Soulmate AU, everyone gets the nickname their soulmate uses/will use tattooed on them, there's a game of truth or dare in the end, they're very cringy

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

**Relationships:** Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak & Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Richie Tozier/Original Female Character(s)

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2017-10-10

**Updated:** 2017-10-10

**Packaged:** 2020-01-26 12:46:23

**Rating:** Not Rated

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 7,910

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

When Eddie wakes up on his sixteenth birthday, he finds Eds tattooed onto his skin, but Richie has already found his soulmate. A lot of people hide their soulmate tattoos, but none of them are friends with Richie Tozier.

## Eds

### *Eds*

The word etched into his skin just below his collarbone seemed like a joke to him. It was his sixteenth birthday and he just checked his whole body for the nickname only to find this. He didn't expect it to be a nickname he already had, especially not the stupidly annoying nickname Richie used.

What was the chance of another person calling him that sometime in the future? It was probably more likely than Richie being his soulmate, his obnoxious best friend who was ridiculously in love with Amy Cardinal. They had been together for months now and Eddie was sure one of these days he was actually going to barf, if Amy called Richie Trashmouth in that sweet voice one more time. Just because the name was tattooed onto Richie's bicep didn't mean, she had to use it all the time. It wasn't like Richie called her Mouse all that often.

Casting one last look at his own tattoo in the mirror, Eddie turned around and quickly pulled on a red polo shirt, making sure it completely covered the tattoo.

---

The Losers waited for him in front of the school. To wish him a happy birthday, but Eddie knew they were more eager to learn what his tattoo said. He wasn't going to tell them though. Out of all of them Richie had been the only one to show them right away, flexing his muscles, grinning. *"So which one of you fuckers is in love with me? Is it you, Eds? You know it'll break your mom's heart if you take me away from her."*

Bev had tried to hide hers at first, but that had only lasted for a couple of days, because she couldn't wear scarves or turtlenecks forever and the Losers had all seen the word Embers on her neck. This had caused Ben to turn bright red. Eddie didn't know what nickname Bev had for him, because Ben refused to show them. Not because it was embarrassing, but because of the position of the

tattoo, at least that's what they told them.

They'd all seen Bill's tattoo once summer started and Richie hadn't stopped making fun of the name right above his knee since. Eddie secretly thought it was sweet, that Bill's soulmate would call him their Rock. But Richie wouldn't be Richie, if he didn't have a thing to say about it. *"You're about as tough as a marshmallow, Rocky"* or *"It's probably because you're constantly rock hard for this chick."*

And Stan and Mike had succeeded in keeping their tattoos secret for now, although Eddie had seen a glimpse of Mike's poking out of his waistband the last time they went swimming in the quarry. They didn't even have a clue where Stan's was located, which had led to Richie finding numerous ways to get the other boy out of his clothes. One of these days he would get so frustrated about not knowing, he might just set all of Stan's clothes on fire.

"Eds, my man!", Richie yelled, when he joined them, handing his cigarette to Beverly and grabbing Eddie by the wrists. "Let's look at how much you've grown."

He raised Eddie's arms then twirled him around, before Eddie could free himself, knowing Richie was looking for the tattoo. "Don't call me that", he muttered, carefully taking a step away from Richie.

Bill pulled him into a hug. "Happy B-b-birthday, Eddie."

One after the other the Losers hugged him, which was fine until Richie lifted the hem of his shirt when he did it and Eddie quickly pushed him away. "Keep your dirty hands to yourself!"

"Oh come on, Eddie Spaghetti, just let us see it."

"Fuck off!"

"Maybe you shouldn't undress Eddie in front of your girlfriend", Beverly said amused and pointed at Amy walking up to them.

Richie threw an arm around the tall, blonde girl – how was it fair

that even the girls in this school were taller than Eddie? – and kissed her sloppily on the cheek. “Amy understands I’m just doing my job.”

“It’s not your job to molest your friends”, Stan pointed out.

“Are you jealous, Stan?”, Richie asked. “Don’t worry, I’ll still steal your clothes in P.E.”

Was this what Eddie would have to deal with now? If Richie had been annoying when it came to Stan’s tattoo, he was going to be a thousand times worse about Eddie’s. He didn’t know why Richie always picked on him the most, it was just something Eddie had gotten used to, but if Richie saw his tattoo... No, he would never be able to live that down.

When the school bell rang, Eddie followed Richie and Amy, while the rest of the Losers split up in different directions. Eddie cast the couple a look out of the corner of his eye. Amy was nice, Eddie had even liked her before she and Richie had gotten together, now she was just annoying and always present and Eddie hated her. Before today he’d just assumed that he felt that way because Amy wasn’t part of the Loser Club and she made it hard for them to hang out like they used to, but now with that tattoo he wasn’t so sure about that. But Richie couldn’t be his soulmate, he’d already found his with Amy. He sure as hell would never look at Eddie the way he was looking at her right now.

They stopped in front of their history class and Amy wrapped her arms around Richie’s neck, giving him a long kiss. Eddie looked away, thinking about all the germs they were transmitting to each other made him queasy.

“See you later, Trashmouth”, Amy said sweetly and hurried along to her own class.

---

Somehow Eddie had survived three classes with Richie without the older boy trying to find his tattoo, well except for the long looks he gave him, when they sat next to each other and were supposed to do

work, but Eddie could live with that as long as Richie kept his fingers to himself. Still, he was a lot more relaxed in the classes he didn't share with the Trashmouth.

"M-maybe you should just t-t-t-tell him n-now", Bill said, while they were working on an experiment in Chem Lab. "You know h-h-he-ee isn't go-going to st-stop until he knows."

"But I don't want him to know."

"How b-bad can it b-b-be? W-w-worse than Ro-ro-ro-rocky?"

Despite himself Eddie grinned at that. He knew Bill wasn't exactly thrilled about Richie's jokes, but if anyone could handle them it was Bill and the whole Rocky thing was kind of funny.

"Much worse", he said.

"Th-then you should t-t-talk to Stan. Get s-some tips to hi-hi-hide it."

---

Before Richie could get the idea to follow Eddie home like he used to do – but that was before Amy, now he seldom did it – Eddie and Stan got their bikes and rode to Stan's house. He'd been here before, but they rarely hung out at Stan's house. Usually the Losers met in the Barrens or at Bill's house, sometimes at Richie's or Ben's. Eddie supposed it was because Stan's parents were too strict, the same way the Losers didn't come to his house because of his overbearing mother.

"You have to help me hide this thing from Richie", Eddie said as soon as they were in Stan's room. Everything was neat in here. The bed was made, everything on the desk had its place, nothing was lying on the floor and even the bird posters on Stan's wall were framed instead of just taped to the wall. Maybe Stan didn't invite them over, because they'd bring chaos into this.

Stan sighed and sat on the chair in front of his desk. "Is it really worth it?"

“What?” Eddie hadn’t expected Stan to talk him out of it. He should know better than anyone that keeping secrets from Richie was sometimes necessary. Sometimes – like now – your life depended on it.

“I’m just saying...” Stan pushed a curl out of his face. “You know how he is with you. He riles me up and gets in my space, but he’ll stop eventually. He doesn’t even dare to bother Mike like that, but you... he’s not going to stop until he sees that tattoo.”

Why? That was the second time today he’d been told that and Eddie just wanted to know why Richie had to be like that? The cheek pinching, the nicknames, the mom jokes... Eddie had to admit that he didn’t hate any of that as much as he let on, but would it really hurt Richie to just ease up on him for once? Maybe Eddie should just ask him to, they were friends after all, but he already knew he wouldn’t do it. He didn’t want Richie or the others to think he couldn’t take it, and maybe he liked Richie’s attention, maybe.

“Okay, if you’re sure”, Stan said, taking his silence as an answer. “Where is it?”

Eddie traced a finger over his collarbone. Stan shook his head – whatever that meant – and opened the bottom drawer of his desk, grabbed something and took a seat next to Eddie on the bed.

Was that really...? Eddie raised his eyebrows at Stan, his lips twitched as he tried to suppress a grin. “Is that makeup?”

Stan’s eyes were hard as he looked up. “Do you want me to help you or not?”

“Sure, sure”, he said quickly. Stan took one of his arms and started to apply the makeup there. Eddie didn’t know how that would help, but let him do it anyway. “But why do you have makeup?”

“Because nobody suspects it and it’s the least obvious way to hide it.” Stan grinned and Eddie had to give it to him. He’d always thought that Stan’s tattoo was like Mike or Ben’s, always hidden by clothing, but then again, Richie had stolen all of Stan’s clothes the last time they went swimming, even gone so far as to pull his swim trunks off him in the water and there had been no markings visible anywhere.

“And it doesn’t come off in the water?”

“I usually make sure not to rub at it too much and apply some more after swimming.” Stan held out Eddie’s arm into the sunlight falling through the window. “This shade is too pale for you.”

They’d gone to the store after that and Eddie had to sacrifice part of his allowance for makeup. If his mother knew about this, she would freak out. Only girls and faggots wore makeup. The guy behind the counter didn’t seem to care about it though, maybe it wasn’t as uncommon as he had thought to cover your soulmate tattoo with makeup.

Back at Stan’s house, Eddie didn’t really know what to do with the stuff they had bought. Hesitantly he looked to Stan, who seemed to be waiting for him to do something.

“I could show you how”, he said. “But then you’d have to let me see it.”

This morning Eddie had been sure, he’d never show his tattoo to anyone, but he also knew if he didn’t let Stan show him how to do it, he’d do a poor job at covering it up, maybe so poorly the others would see it right away.

“If I do, you can’t tell anyone.”

Stan nodded. He had been leaning against his closet, but came closer now. Out of all the Losers, Eddie would’ve thought it be Bill, who he’d show eventually, not Stan, not on the first day, but this whole soulmate business was full of surprises, wasn’t it?

When Stan sat opposite him again, Eddie pulled his shirt over his head. He could feel the blood rush to his cheeks, when he saw Stan’s eyes widen, his mouth forming a silent O as he read the nickname. Without saying a word, he grabbed the makeup and started to apply it to Eddie’s collarbone. It took longer than he had expected, but he could see the routine in Stan’s movements and was suddenly glad he had asked him for help.

“There”, Stan said, leaning backwards when he was done. “You can’t



even tell it's there anymore." He got up and grabbed a small mirror from the desk drawer and held it out for Eddie to see his work. He was right.

Carefully Eddie traced his fingers over the skin where the stupid nickname had been just minutes ago, then smiled brightly at Stan. "Thank you."

"Did you see how I did it?"

Eddie nodded. "I think so."

"Good, then you try it now."

Stan made him try it three times until he was satisfied with the result, which Eddie thought was typical, but he didn't complain. Stan was doing him a favour here. When they were done, Eddie could finally put his shirt back on.

"Don't worry about it. I'll have your back. Nobody is going to see that tattoo unless you want them too." And Eddie hadn't even known how worried he'd been until Stan said it. He returned the smile and then put the makeup into his bag. Now he just needed to find a good spot to hide it at home.

"Thank you", he said again. "And... uhm... I'll do the same for you."

The smile on Stan's face faltered a little at that and then he was the one pulling his shirt off. He took the cloth they had used to scrub the makeup off Eddie's tattoo and started to rub at his side. At first Eddie was confused, but then he saw the letters on Stan's ribcage and smiled. *Studley*. Well, that explained why he wouldn't let Richie see it.

---

The Losers were meeting in the Barrens, two days later. They were all splayed out on the grass, listening to music, reading books and comics and smoking in the case of Richie and Bev. At least he hadn't dragged Amy down here.

“Hey, Eds!” Eddie almost jumped when Richie’s voice cut through the music.

“Don’t call me that!”

“I’m offended, you know. It’s been three fucking days and you still haven’t told anyone what your fucking tattoo says.”

“You mean you’re offended he hasn’t told you”, Beverly said. She was lying with her head on Ben’s thigh, eyes closed and a gleaming cigarette between her lips.

Eddie saw Richie’s eyes widen behind his glasses and then he pointed at him accusingly. “You told her?! You told her and not me?”

Eddie snorted. “Why do you even care?”

He went back to read his comic, but could see Stan grinning next to him. No, this wasn’t over yet, he knew that too.

Richie clutched his heart dramatically. “Why do I care? Why do I care? My dearest Eds, I need to know what magical name is going to steal you away from me, my love.”

He knew Richie was joking. He was always joking, and that made it so much worse. He hadn’t meant to react at all, and maybe he could’ve played it off as annoyance when he pressed his lips tightly together and glared at Richie, but that was before he had shown Stan his tattoo. The boy next to him lightly bumped his shoulder against Eddie’s and smiled, and it made his heart ache a little less.

“It’s your mom’s”, he muttered.

“Really?”, Richie cackled. “Your soulmate is going to call you Maggie Tozier? Kinky roleplay you guys have going there. Let me see!”

Eddie flipped him the finger. “It’s right here, Trashmouth.”

“Do you think soulmate names can change?” Stan asked suddenly. “I mean, if Ben just stopped calling Bev Embers and used something else, would her tattoo change to that?”

The others looked at each other for a while, all contemplating that. If that were true, maybe he could get Richie to stop calling him Eds. Well, even if Richie actually was his soulmate that would never happen and he definitely wasn't.

"Don't know, Stan", Richie said, flexing his arm so everyone could see the name tattooed onto his bicep. "Why don't you tell your mom to stop calling me Trashmouth and we'll see what happens."

"Beep beep, Richie", Bill sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"I'm just saying since you're so interested in all that soulmate junk", Stan said. "You could see if my theory works with Amy."

Richie shrugged, stole the cigarette from Beverly and laid back down into the grass. Eddie tried to keep his eyes on the comic in front of him, but he didn't succeed. A soft summer breeze blew through Richie's dark curls and Eddie wondered how soft they would be if he carded his fingers through them. He watched Richie's lips as he dragged on the cigarette and was immediately reminded of the numerous times he had pressed them to his cheek, it was almost as if his cheek was burning right now just by the memory of it.

He raised his hand to brush his fingers over his cheek, when Stan bumped into him again. Maybe he regretted showing Stan the tattoo a little. Stan who always knew everything, who now also knew about his dumb crush on Richie.

"Want to go?", Stan whispered.

Eddie was about to say no, because he loved being around the other Losers and what would they be doing anyway, but then Richie sat up again and looked at him with that grin that never meant anything good.

"I bet I can guess where your tattoo is", he said. "And if I'm right, you'll have to show me."

Ignoring him, Eddie looked back to Stan. "Okay, yeah."

He followed Stan as he got up, seeing the puzzled looks on the other Losers. "Eddie and I have a school project", Stan said, the lie rolling

easily of his tongue. Eddie had never thought Stan would be a good liar, but maybe that was because he had never caught him in one before.

It was evident from their faces that they didn't really believe them, but nobody but Richie protested. As they walked back to their bikes, Eddie couldn't help but smile. It was somewhat exhilarating to have a secret from the rest of the Losers, something just he and Stan knew about.

---

The following days were much like that day at the Barrens. Richie would become too much to handle and Stan would give him an out. Richie would grow frustrated with his never-ending quest to figure out both of their tattoos and disappear to hang out with Amy, which in return would frustrate Eddie. Today they were at the quarry to go swimming and Eddie was nervous, even though Stan had assured him the makeup could stand to get wet, he just had to make sure not to rub at his collarbone too much, but when he pulled the shirt over his head he was sure everyone would notice the makeup right away. He waited with baited breath, looking at the others, but none of them said anything.

“Are you checking me out, Eddiebear?”, Richie called, running a hand down his chest and rolling his lips. Maybe he had absentmindedly stared in his direction, but... ugh, sometimes he really hated Richie. He definitely hated how good Richie looked when he moved like that. Fuck.

Bev laughed and hit Richie with her skirt. “You’re ridiculous, Tozier. Go and cool off, will you?”

“Only if Eddie joins me. He’s giving me the same bedroom eyes like his mom did last night.”

“You’re so gross”, Eddie huffed as he walked past Richie into the water. He was not giving him bedroom eyes just to be clear. He wasn’t even sure what that looked like or if he had bedroom eyes.

Richie quickly caught up with him and wrapped his arms around Eddie's neck. "You love it."

"Do not!"

By now the water reached his waist and Eddie ducked so Richie, who was leaning heavily on him, fell face first into the water. Knowing he had just started something, he quickly ran deeper into the water, but didn't get far until someone grabbed his leg and pulled him under.

When he resurfaced, spluttering and gasping for air, Richie was laughing at him, curls sticking to his face, water dripping down his freckled nose and his parted lips. He was beautiful... and Eddie stared at him just a little too long to give Richie the opportunity to grab him by the shoulders and dunk him again. He dove away, but when he broke the surface this time the fight had extended to the rest of the Losers and he was splashed in the face by Ben.

They fought like this until they were all exhausted and trudged to the shore to dry in the sun. Eddie had just closed his eyes to doze off, when he was jerked to alertness by someone slapping a hand to his shoulder. His heart rate immediately picked up and spiked even further, when he saw the slight alarm in Stan's eyes and how conveniently he had placed his hand directly over the stupid tattoo. The others looked over, alerted by the sudden movement or the slapping sound that had occurred.

"Just a mosquito", Stan said, lying smoothly. How did he do that? Eddie was slightly envious, knowing how useful such a talent could be, especially with a mother like his.

"Thanks", Eddie mumbled, not looking at the others as he grabbed his bag and threw the towel over his shoulder, hiding the tattoo from view. "Can you help me with something real quick?"

They walked until they were out of sight from the others before Eddie dared take a look at his tattoo. It wasn't completely legible, but the dark letters were starting to shine through the makeup. Thank God for Stan. If Richie had seen it, it wouldn't have taken him long to make out the name written on his skin.

Without asking for permission, Stan grabbed the makeup from Eddie's bag and started to reapply it, which he was thankful for. Without a mirror, he was still pretty bad at this. When he was done, Eddie returned the favour. Two boys, half-naked, applying makeup to each other, Eddie thought, if anyone saw them they'd be sure to get a good beating for this.

---

The Losers sans Richie were sitting in Bill's garage, getting ready for movie night. Eddie couldn't help but look for Richie, but when nobody else seemed to be waiting for him, even though he was always late, he understood Richie wouldn't be coming. He was probably doing something with Amy.

Glumly he sat on the floor next to Mike as they watched Star Wars. Sure, he was glad he didn't have to hear Richie's nagging about the damn tattoo, but it wasn't really movie night without his voices and stupid comments. Or without him throwing popcorn at everyone who fell asleep. Or him sitting next to Eddie, poking his cheek or ribs whenever he got bored.

"What happened to Richie?", Mike asked after a while. Sometimes Eddie felt bad for him. Since he was home-schooled, there was a lot of things he missed out on. Usually the others filled him in, but still... sometimes you just had to be there.

"He's probably with Amy", Eddie said, hoping his voice sounded indifferent and not annoyed.

Beverly snorted. "I don't think so. If you had been at lunch today, you would've known they broke up?"

He and Stan had skipped lunch today, because Richie had gotten so annoying during P.E. that they had needed some peace and quiet. Apparently Mike wasn't the only one who missed out on stuff.

"They did?", he asked, turning around to look at her. "Why?"

"You want the Richie version or what I think happened?"

“Let me guess”, Mike said. “He fucked her mom?”

Normally Eddie would have laughed at that, but right now he just needed to know why they had broken up. Maybe he would’ve known if he hadn’t ignored Richie so much the past days. Was he okay? Sure, he was obnoxious, but he was still Eddie’s best friend and he felt guilty now. Breaking up with your soulmate... Eddie hadn’t even known that was possible.

“Correct.” Bev smiled. “I think it was bound to happen. Either Amy found her soulmate or she got bored with him or vice versa. I mean, we all knew that couldn’t last forever.”

“Wait what?”, Eddie exclaimed. “I thought they were soulmates.”

At this Beverly laughed so hard, tears formed in her eyes. Ben giggled quietly, but at least all the other guys looked just as confused as Eddie felt. Good, he wasn’t the only one.

“Oh come on, guys”, Beverly snorted, when she finally calmed down a bit. “Seriously?”

Bill shrugged. “They d-d-did call e-each other by their n-n-n-nicknames.”

“As a joke! Richie hated Amy’s and she thought Trashmouth was funny but ridiculous. Richie only ever started calling her Mouse after he saw her tattoo.”

“Oh.”

Not soulmates. Despite his guilt over being a bad friend to Richie lately, Eddie’s heart starting to beat faster, a little happy jig. It still didn’t mean Richie was his soulmate, but there was a possibility now. He did call him Trashmouth after all and who else called him Eds?

“I can’t believe you all thought they were soulmates. Rich is going to love this.”

---

The rest of the movie night was a bit of a blur to Eddie. He couldn't focus on the movies even though he loved Star Wars, instead his thoughts kept going back to Richie. Bev hadn't told them, why he wasn't here tonight and that only made Eddie worry more. Richie wouldn't tell any of them if the breakup had upset him, probably not even Bev, but him not being here was all the answer Eddie needed.

They were supposed to stay the night, but Eddie didn't feel like staying anymore. He needed to check up on Richie, even if his friend would just make stupid jokes and send him on his way again, but at least then he'd have tried. As everyone grabbed their bags to head to Bill's room, Eddie hung back, trying to think of an excuse to go home.

Stan put a hand on his shoulder, smiling knowingly. Of course Stan would know. "Are you going to tell him now?"

Was he? Probably not. It didn't really feel like the right time, not when Richie had just broken up with Amy. And... Eddie hadn't thought about it before, but if Richie could be upset about Eddie not telling him about his tattoo, then Eddie was upset that Richie didn't tell him Amy wasn't his soulmate. Wasn't that something best friends should share? So no, he wasn't going to tell Richie tonight. He shook his head.

"Maybe you should."

Eddie brushed Stan's hand away. "Just tell them I forgot my toothbrush. There's no way I'm not brushing my teeth before bed. They'll believe that."

Stan nodded and followed the others into the house, while Eddie got on his bike and rode to Richie's house. It wasn't a long ride, but Eddie hated being out at night by himself, always fearing Henry Bowers or some hobo might jump out of the shadows, so he was relieved, when he reached Richie's. Carefully he placed his bike by the garage, then snuck around back to Richie's window. There was still light in it, which was good, but Eddie hadn't really thought this far. There was no way to get up there, not that he would've climbed a tree. The chances of him falling and breaking his neck were far too great. So he found some small stones and started throwing them up there. It took him three tries to finally hit the window and then



another five throws until the curtain moved and Richie's face appeared.

"Eddie?", he whisper-yelled when he opened the window. "What are you doing here?"

"Let me in!"

Richie hesitated and then he was gone. It took him so long to get down to the backdoor, Eddie feared he had just decided to ignore him, but then the door opened and Richie waved him over.

"My parents are asleep", he whispered, putting a finger to Eddie's lips, then pulling him inside and up the stairs. Eddie followed him, willing himself not to touch his lips, which were tingling where Richie had touched them. Probably germs.

When Richie closed the door behind him, he took a seat on his unmade bed, while Eddie remained standing in the chaos of his room. Clothes littered the floor and it was almost impossible to see the carpet underneath. There were comics, candy wrappers and various tapes strewn across Richie's desk, but Eddie didn't think he ever did any real work there anyway.

"So? Why are you here, Eds? I thought you were all at Big Bill's. Couldn't stay away from me, could you?" Richie smirked.

"Shut up! Why weren't you there? Bev told us about you and Amy and I thought... I don't know." Eddie trailed off, unwilling to admit he had been worried about Richie.

"Aww and now you're here to confess your undying love for me? That's so cute." Richie reached out and pinched Eddie's cheek, before he could slap his hand away, then he pulled his feet up under himself and leaned against the wall. "Actually I'm grounded."

Eddie climbed onto the bed next to him. "What for?"

"Accidentally told a Your Mom joke to my dad."

"Rich..." Eddie sighed, but couldn't hide his smile. Typical Trashmouth. "So you're not upset about Amy?"

Richie shook his head. "Now I have more time to fuck your mom."

"Really? You don't even care a little bit?"

"I guess, I care the appropriate amount. I hear it's never that hard on the person who does the walking."

It had been his idea to breakup? Why? Sure, Eddie hadn't seen them together that much lately, but he still thought they had looked happy together, which was exactly why he had stayed away. He had so many more questions to ask Richie, but feared Richie would think it weird if he kept pushing. Eddie decided to settle for one last question, the most important.

"Why didn't you tell me she wasn't your soulmate?"

Richie looked at him from behind his huge glasses and Eddie expected him to laugh just like Bev had, but he remained silent. "Why didn't you tell me Stan was yours?"

"That's completely dif... wait what?" Had he really just said that? Him and Stan? If Richie hadn't looked so serious, he might have laughed, but now he just shook his head. "Because he isn't."

"Yeah right... You can't even admit it now? Look, I don't fucking care about the gay thing, Eds. You just... you could've told me."

Eddie groaned. "For fucks sake, Richie, we're not together. He's just helped me hide the tattoo from you and the others."

"For real?"

Eddie nodded, relieved that Richie seemed to believe him now. Also a bit relieved that Richie didn't mind him being gay, not that Eddie himself had thought much about it yet and it didn't mean Richie would be okay with it if it involved him, but it was a start.

The relief only lasted for a second though.

"You let Stan see it? Out of all of us, you showed Stan?"

Instead of defending himself, Eddie grinned. "He showed me his too."

“Don’t be so smug, we all saw his junk when I pantsed him in the quarry.”

For that Eddie hit him in the shoulder, but his cheeks still turned bright red. Letting someone see your tattoo had always been a somewhat intimate thing to Eddie, but not that intimate and the thought alone made him uncomfortable. “Don’t be fucking gross.”

“Can I see it then?”

“No, you can’t.”

“Come on, Eds. Eddie Spaghetti. Eddiepoo. Eddiebear,” Richie sing-songed into his ear and Eddie pushed him away again.

“No!”

“Then tell me about Stan’s! Is it worse than Bill’s? It’s super embarrassing, isn’t it?”

“I’m going now.” Eddie was already off the bed, when Richie grabbed his hand. Thankfully. He didn’t really want to go, mostly because he was scared to be out in the dark again, but a big part of him wanted to stay at Richie’s too, not caring about the messy room and all the germs that might be hiding here.

“You can sleep here.”

“I thought you were grounded.”

“I’ll just sneak you out early tomorrow and they’ll never know.”

“Okay. Fine.”

---

Eddie laughed. “Richie thought we were dating. Can you believe that?”

Stan joined into his laughter, but the rest of the Losers remained quiet. They were pushing their bikes along the street to Mike’s place, where they would be camping tonight to embrace the first day of summer vacation.

Stan looked at their friends incredulously. "You didn't believe that too, did you?"

Ben shrugged. "Well, you're always hanging out together lately."

"Slipping away from group activities", Beverly added.

"S-s-s-secret s-silent conversations", Bill said.

Eddie and Stan looked at each other, both blushing slightly, but then started laughing again. The idea of them dating being completely ridiculous to both of them, not only because Eddie was head over heels in love with Richie, a thing he didn't find as hard to admit anymore. Not to Richie of course, but he was alright with admitting it to himself and maybe to Stan, although Stan probably already knew.

"See", Richie said. "It's not as stupid as you believing Amy was my soulmate."

"They all did too", Eddie said, pointing at everyone else, but Richie just pushed his bike closer to his.

"But they didn't come to my house in the middle of the night to make sure I wasn't heartbroken."

He felt himself blush harder, even his ears started to get warm now. Of course, Eddie did a nice thing for him and Richie just had to make fun of him for it and embarrass him in front of everyone else. He'd told them all about the nightly visit the following Monday at school, but Eddie had hoped after a week he would've found something else to make fun of. He hadn't.

Richie reached out to ruffle his hair and Eddie ducked away. "Aww, don't blush, Eds. It was really sweet."

"Don't fucking call me that!"

"You love it!"

"No, I hate it, Richie!" He didn't.

They had almost reached Mike's farm, when Richie turned around to

the rest of the Losers again. “Do you know what they were really doing? Have they told you?”

“What do you mean?”, Beverly asked.

“Eddie and Stan. What all those secrets are about?” A large grin was plastered to Richie’s face now, which Eddie didn’t really understand. He had told him nothing about Stan’s tattoo or his own, hadn’t told him how they were hiding them, nothing... So he really had no reason to be this smug.

Stan seemed to think differently. “You told him?”, he asked, looking at Eddie shocked. “You told him about the makeup?”

Eddie slapped his forehead just as he heard Richie guffaw next to him. Please, please, please let the earth swallow him whole right in this instant.

“Makeup?”, Richie cried, excited like a child on Christmas. “What the fuck? Now you have to tell me!”

Stan’s shocked expression quickly changed to one of regret, then horror. “Shit... you didn’t tell him?”

“No.”

“I want to hear this too”, Beverly said.

They had all stopped in the middle of the street. Ben, Bev, Bill and Richie almost leering at them to get the scoop. Eddie was somewhat relieved this wasn’t his fault, but had hoped that the makeup secret was one he could’ve taken to the grave.

“Come on, spit it out, Eds.”

Stan sighed, glaring at Richie. “It’s how we hide them so none of your stupid stunts can catch us off-guard.”

Richie grabbed Eddie’s face, startling the younger boy, and started to turn it and scrutinize it. His fingers were warm, pleasant, and almost soft, softer than he had expected. It took Eddie longer than usual to step away from the touch. “It’s not on my face, you idiot”, he said.

“Then where is it?”

“None of your business.”

Richie turned to Stan, smiling almost serenely now. “Stan”, he called sweetly. “Stan the Man. If you tell me what Eddie’s tattoo says I’ll stop bothering you. I’ll never steal your clothes again.”

Eddie’s heart sank. Sure, Stan was his friend, but that was a very enticing offer. Pleadingly he looked at him and was immediately relieved to see Stan shake his head. Thank God, Stan was such a loyal friend.

“Are you sure? You could have the peace and quiet you love so much.”

“Beep beep, Richie”, Beverly said as she started to push her bike again. “Leave them alone.”

Eddie could’ve kissed her. She might’ve only bought them a little time, but that was enough for now. Enough time to clear his head from any thoughts regarding Richie’s stupid soft hands.

---

The sun had set, the tents were all set up and Mike had started a camp fire on which they were roasting marshmallows at the moment. Eddie sat on a bale of straw, his legs pulled to his chest and stared into the flames. He was happy, he thought. Despite his nagging mother, his nosy friends and his dumb crush, he was happy right now and he was going to take a moment to take it all in and enjoy it.

“We should play Truth or Dare”, Richie suggested. And the moment was over.

He was about to protest, when Beverly agreed and if Bev was on board so was Ben. Bill just shrugged, which was taken as a Yes.

“No way”, Stan said.

“What do you say, Mike?” Beverly asked. “It’s just a bit of fun.”

Mike hesitated a moment, but then he gave in too. No one tried to persuade Eddie or Stan, they were already outnumbered and had no say. He still had the option of just walking away, but Eddie didn't want to be that person. Fine, he'd play.

"I'll start!", Richie said. His eyes lingered on Eddie for a moment, but then he turned to Stan. "Stan, Truth or Dare?"

"Truth."

Richie grinned. "Whose tattoo is more embarrassing yours or Eddie's?"

Well, that wasn't so bad, but knowing Richie, he was just gearing up for the big bravado, so Eddie didn't dare feel too safe at this point. Stan glanced briefly at him before he answered. "Mine."

Eddie would agree with that. His own was only embarrassing around this group of people, Stan's would be embarrassing everywhere.

The game went on with Bill confessing he had a crush on someone, Richie dancing around the fire in his underwear, Ben having to recite one of the love poems he'd written for Bev and then it was his turn.

"Truth", he told Ben.

"Where is your tattoo?"

An easy one. Well, if you didn't think about all the times Richie was going to attack him now to try and see it. "Here." He ran a finger along his collarbone, then turned to Mike, quickly moving the game along. "Mike, Truth or Dare?"

"Dare."

"I dare you to... suck on Ben's toe."

The others groaned in disgust. It was the best thing he could come up with on the spot. It would definitely be a hard dare for him, he'd probably refuse, so he was glad he wasn't the one to do it. Although he was clearly grossed out, Mike did it. They had yet to find a dare Mike would back out of.

He then asked Bev if she had ever stolen from one of them (Yes, cigarettes from Richie) and she dared Richie to give Bill a hickey, which he did without complaining, Bill did most of that, but it didn't stop Richie from giving him a big, red bruise on his neck. Eddie thought it looked kind of hot, when Richie was sucking and biting at Bill's neck, but he could also feel anger rise in him. Bill didn't want it, so they should accept that and just have Richie do something else, something that didn't involve kissing or hi...

"Eddie", Richie called, snapping him out of his jealous thoughts. "Truth or Dare."

"Truth."

"You already had a truth last time", he said, smiling. "You know the rule, no two truths in a row."

"Fuck that!" He was not going to do a dare from Richie. Richie's dares sucked and either involved getting ten different diseases or almost killing yourself in some freak accident.

"That's the r-r-rule, Eddie", Bill said and he didn't even have the decency to look apologetic about it.

"Fine, dare." There was no point in arguing, it was in fact the rule. They had all agreed on it two years ago after a particularly boring game of truth or dare, which had consisted mostly of truths.

Richie clapped his hands together. "Great! Show us your tattoo!"

"N-no!"

"Come on, Richie, pick something else. That's just mean", Stan said. It was. They had never dared Mike, Ben or Stan to show theirs, somehow they had all agreed it was a step too far.

"How bad can it be? Just show us", Richie persisted.

Sudden anger took over. If Richie wanted to put him on the spot, he was going to make him regret it. Glaring at him, Eddie pulled his shirt off.



“Eddie, don’t!”, Stan said, softly. “You don’t have to do that.”

Oh yes, he did. If anything it would teach Richie the lesson of minding his own damn business, because sometimes secrets were kept for a reason. He grabbed a bottle of water and some tissues from his bag and started to rub at his skin until the makeup started to come off. Not everything did, but it was enough so the others could see his tattoo. Eds. Defiantly he stared back at them, making sure all of them had read it, before he pulled his shirt back on. “Happy now?”, he spat. “Fuck you, Richie! Fuck you!”

---

Eddie got up and stomped into the darkness. He only stopped when he almost ran into the wooden fence that surrounded the field. Tears were prickling in his eyes, but he willed them not to fall. No way was he going to cry because of Richie. Someone was bound to follow him at some point and he was not going to let them see him cry. His breath was ragged and for the first time in months he wished he still had his inhaler. It was fake, but it had always gotten rid of that tight feeling in his chest, opened up his airways and helped to calm him down.

Right as he started to hear footsteps behind him, he could feel the tears rolling down his cheeks, hot and wet. Great timing, just great. It would probably be Stan or maybe Bill, but fuck them. None of them had stopped Richie. Well Stan had tried, but none of the others. They were all assholes with Richie being the King of the Assholes. Maybe they should call themselves the Asshole Club instead.

“Eds?” Not Bill, not Stan... Richie. For fucks sake.

Eddie briefly glanced over his shoulder, hoping Richie wouldn’t be able to see his tears in the faint moonlight, then turned back to lean on the fence. “Fuck off!”

“I’m... Fuck, Eddie, I’m so-...”

„Shut up! Why do you always have to push? Why can’t you just leave things be for once? No, you always have to poke your nose into other

people's business, always have to make your jokes, always have to tease. You're such a fucking asshole, Richie, and now fuck off!" He didn't need to hear him say that he wasn't gay or not interested in Eddie in the same way. Eddie would get over his dumb crush and then later on he'd probably even forgive Richie for being such a jerk, because it was Richie and he could never stay mad at him, but right now, he just didn't want to hear anything he had to say.

Instead of leaving, Richie came to lean next to him against the fence. "Why didn't you say anything?"

Eddie didn't answer, didn't feel like he had to explain anything to Richie. He just chewed on his bottom lip to stop himself from screaming or ripping his head off. What was he supposed to say to Richie anyway? Hey, I have your stupid nickname written on me, now break up with your girlfriend and be with me? That would've gone over great.

"Eds, why didn't you say anything?", Richie repeated, his voice serious but also... pleading?

"Because you were with Amy", he said, picking the easiest answer. He brushed the tears away with his knuckles and turned to face Richie.

"And after that?"

Eddie shrugged.

"You know... I broke up with her because I was jealous." Richie took a deep breath. "I was jealous because I thought Stan was your soulmate."

It took a few moments for Eddie to piece that information together. Richie never got jealous, not for real. He made all those jokes but nothing was ever for real, although... Richie joked about stuff that was important to him too. Offense was the best defence.

He hadn't noticed Richie stepping closer until he was right up in his space and Eddie had to look up to meet his eyes. His heart was beating incredibly fast again, his breath hitched, his hands were

suddenly clammy and then none of that mattered, because Richie's hands cupped his face, his thumb brushed away a stray tear and he kissed him. Not the sloppy annoying way, he'd pressed kisses to Eddie's cheeks before. This was soft, gentle and it caught Eddie so off-guard that he forgot to kiss back.

As he pulled away, Richie's hands fell from his cheeks. "Sorry", he mumbled. "I thought..."

Not knowing how to explain his feelings with words, Eddie grabbed Richie by the collar and pulled him down to press their lips together again. Richie's hands found their way back to his face and into his hair. He was kissing Richie. He was kissing Richie Trashmouth Tozier. The thought made him hum into the kiss and he could feel Richie's lips stretch into a smile.

"You don't even call me Trashmouth that much", Richie said, when they parted.

"But it's the only nickname I have for you."

"I can help you come up with a new one." A grin spread across his face and Eddie already knew he wouldn't like any of Richie's suggestions. "You could call me Hot Stuff."

"More like Hot Mess", he said, rolling his eyes.

Richie laughed and pressed a kiss to his forehead. "At least I'm hot."

"Shut up!" And at least he had a good way of making him shut up now. Eddie stretched and kissed Richie, but the older boy only kissed him back for a moment, then stepped away.

"Hey I just realized. That means you don't hate Eds, do you?", he said triumphantly, beaming down at Eddie.

He could feel the heat rush to his cheeks and was thankful for the darkness. No, not at all, but like hell would he admit that now. "It's not as bad as the rest."

**Author's Note:**

God this got so much longer than I intended it to be, but it's finally done now. I'm not completely happy with the way I wrote Eddie and the reason I made Ben and Mike's tattoos a secret is because it took me hours to come up with something for Stan and I still hate that one. I hope you enjoyed it anyway.

Talk to me on tumblr @itchierichie